

decide the knotty point as to which is really the best design. This is done—with I suppose the parish to pay,—yet after all, his opinion proves worthless, for the stupid man persists in reporting most favourably of the stranger's design; it is therefore found ridiculous and absurd to expect a professional man to possess either taste or judgment in a matter of this kind, and a cry being raised that the nameless individual's plan had not more than enough room, and that the other had, it was finally settled that the unknown should be sent about his business.

Thus you see, Sir, 900*l.* to 1,000*l.* have been expended by us foolish people in complying with the wishes of the guardians, which we might just as well have kept in our pockets, had those few gentlemen who were aware of the fact before been so good as to inform us they possessed such a jewel of an architect at Bristol.

While confessing myself the fortunate winner of the very liberal premium of 25 guineas, I must own to have committed one great error, for which I here beg to offer my apology. Whether it was from some vague notion of having heard of such things as sham competitions, wherein some evil-disposed persons, for the sake of taking in the unwary, threw dust in the eyes of their colleagues who happened to be too honest, or whether it was from not having the proper fear of the guardians before my eyes, or perhaps some old-fashioned notions, that where honesty exists there is no need for concealment, however this may be, I actually had the temerity to ask permission to see the successful design, in order that I might inform my professional brethren from ocular demonstration that they never had and never would have a chance of success in Bristol again. I am sorry I did it now, but fortunately there was no danger of its being complied with. I was met by a peremptory refusal; and now I reflect on it, what right have we to inquire if faith has been kept with us; is it not sufficient that we are allowed to expend our time, and money upon the faith of their advertisement? It must have been thought grossly impertinent in us, or any other of the competitors, to make such an inconvenient request. The refusal of the board, however, speedily brought me to my senses, otherwise I might have been led to doubt if the man who obtains my money under false pretences is the best judge of honour and integrity.

There will, I fear, be some persons wicked enough to believe, notwithstanding the protestations of the authorities to the contrary, that they have been duped, and that the whole affair has been a rank job, perhaps others may call it by an epithet not quite so polite; but these are easily put down,—call them disappointed people, and the thing is done. In adding my testimony to the perfection of the system of competition, I cannot but express my decided admiration of that pursued at Clifton, which, for the guidance of all those who wish the arts of the country to flourish, may be reduced to the following receipt. Take a large portion of the ordinary stuff of society, mix them up with a few gentlemen who are far above suspicion of doing any thing at all, but they must not be omitted, as they act as decoys; drop in then one or two shrewd, clever, but not over-scrupulous fellows, don't be afraid of their sinking, for their lightness of character will always keep them at the top; simmer the whole together until the acum begins to rise, and it is done. This, I assure you, is the finest mixture for catching architects that can be procured.

I am, Sir, &c.

THOMAS ALLEN.

Hart-street, Bloomsbury,  
March 18th, 1845.

#### CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL AT HOLLOWAY.

SIR,—A well-conducted press can have no more legitimate object than the exposing abuses with a view to their removal. Your strictures upon the abuses to which competition in the fine arts is liable, prove that you are willing to lend your valuable assistance to destroy as far as possible the evil of the system, and to retain what is good. Competition of this kind, although not exclusively confined to architectural design, is resorted to more for that than any other object, both on account of the greater demand for subjects, and

the greater numbers of persons willing to supply that demand.

Architectural competition, in itself excellent, is rendered delusive by the manner in which it is conducted. Capable of eliciting the finest works, it has frequently produced the very worst. Interest, not talent, gains the prize; and acquaintance with a committee-man is better than knowledge of the five orders. Architects have frequently themselves to blame; young men anxious for employment compete for every thing that offers, and thus often become the mere tools of designing speculators; but what shall we say when architects themselves, as is too frequently the case, become partners in the fraud.

Nothing will more effectually tend to remedy this great, this crying evil, than an exposure of every individual case in which there is the slightest appearance of trickery, or a want of manly straightforwardness; not a doubtful anonymous charge to which currency is given under the guise of "vizitor" or "scrutator," but a plain statement of facts to which for the public benefit, the writer will suffer the little inconvenience which may attach to subscribing his own name.

At the present time we think the following slight history of the competition of the Congregational Chapel at Holloway, will be acceptable to many of your readers. Allured by the fairness of the advertisement, we were tempted to become competitors, and on application to the quarter mentioned in the advertisement, were duly supplied with a printed paper containing very full particulars of all that was required, drawn up in the most business-like way possible: this excited inquiry, and inquiry produced the discovery that a Mr. Emmett, an architect, was a member of the committee. We immediately set to work with redoubled vigour, feeling convinced that if not ourselves successful, we should only have to succumb to greater talent, or more fortunately directed efforts, and that a committee so ably guided in the straight path, would do nothing at which the most censorious could cavil. Still doubts would intrude—we endeavoured to crush the obnoxious thought at once: could we, following in the course of that colubinator Dickens, believe there were Pecksniffs in the profession? Never! But the still small voice would not be quieted, it had been done, and might be done again, and perhaps after all Mr. Emmett did intend being a competitor himself. To satisfy all doubts, we applied to Mr. Emmett for information respecting the arrangements necessary for the proper performance of worship in a congregational chapel, our knowledge thereof being somewhat defective. The answer, meagrely but civilly gave the information required; this was sufficient, more was not expected from a member of a committee, pledged to do equal justice to all. It was apparently good proof that he did not intend competing, as in that case he should certainly have stated that he himself was a competitor.

Being much engaged we made an application to Mr. Brooks, the managing member of the committee, for an extension of the time, such being frequently granted; but it was refused, and very properly so if not allowed to others. The drawings were sent in on the day named in the instructions, and we heard nothing more of the matter until the 11th instant, when, in reply to an inquiry on the subject, we received the following epistle from Mr. Brooks:—

"Lansdowne-place, Holloway,

"11th March, 1845.

"Mr. Brooks's compliments to Messrs. Labee and Mabin, and begs to say the plans of Messrs. Emmett and Chadwick, of the Adelphi, have been selected, and that the others can be obtained upon application to Mr. Bartlett, of 26, Paternoster-row."

Thus not even deigning the empty courtesy of thanks for trouble taken; it is true one does not expect eider-down from thistles, nor sweet savours from a pole-cat, but civility might have been anticipated from persons, to gratify whom some pains had been taken. In reply to further inquiry as to whether "the report is correct that Mr. Emmett is or was a member of the committee appointed to judge of the designs presented, and also whether the selected design might be seen," the following answer was received:—

"Lansdowne-place, Holloway,

"19th March, 1845.

"Mr. Brooks's compliments to Messrs. Mabin and Labee, and, in reply to their note, begs to say that the successful candidate (Mr. Emmett) ceased to be a member of the committee from the moment he determined upon submitting a design, and ever since has been exactly upon the same footing as the rest of the candidates; he is sorry to say that this is only one of the many falsehoods promulgated in this affair. As respects showing the successful design, he begs to add that the committee have declined doing so."

We have little more to add; yourself and the public are informed of all the facts as far as we know any thing of them, and comment is unnecessary. We write solely on public grounds; feeling little or no personal interest in the matter. Messrs. Emmett and Chadwick's design may have been the very best presented; a full 2,500*l.* worth of beauties, turreted, pinnacled, plastered, and stuccoed, in the most approved style; at any rate, they certainly enjoyed peculiar advantages for understanding the particular tastes and requirements of the Committee, and ought to have produced something more in accordance with their wants than any other persons; but the question is not so much whose plans are the best, or whose the worst, as whether the conduct of the Committee is just and correct, and such as those who have expended time and money, confiding in their honour, have a right to expect.

We are, Sir, &c.,

MABIN AND LABEE.

16, Manor-place, North King's-road, Chelsea.

#### CANTERBURY WORKHOUSE.

SIR,—In your last number you were requested to have a vigilant eye on the Canterbury Incorporation. I have endeavoured to look to the proceedings, and being in Canterbury for a short time, made all the inquiries I could, as I like fair play in every thing, particularly with architects, whose talents, when exerted for the public good, ought to be tested by competent persons. Now, Sir, there were twenty-two designs sent in from various parts, agreeable to the advertisement; and I should say the average time that was given to the architect to get up these plans was only a fortnight. How is it the guardians are pressed for time? Are they so very desirous that the inmates should be enjoying the comforts they intend giving them in the new house, or is it they wish to be sitting in the new board-room, that they are so fast? As there were twenty-two plans and specifications to be examined, will any of your readers inform me what reasonable time it would take for moderate judges to investigate and select three of the best in detail?

I will inform you how long the eleven Canterbury guardians were in doing so; not classing these with other persons, as you will find by the time they took, they were never equalled. They met at eleven o'clock in the forenoon; and, unclosing the twenty-two sets of plans, examining them very carefully in all their details, reading the specifications, and comparing the estimates with the same,—will you believe me when I tell you it, occupied in all but three hours; they left at two o'clock with the three best plans selected, so that you find they are men of extraordinary skill, and I do think that in justice to the most active and skilful of the eleven guardians, their profession and callings should be known, as it must tend very materially to relieve the disappointment the architects feel on having their plans returned "not accepted" to know they have been fairly and carefully treated, and I have only to name their professions for you to be satisfied.

The most skilful amongst them is a baker, a pastry-cook from Germany; how many unions he has seen in Germany I do not know, but it is doubtful if he ever was in one in England. Another is of the Jewish persuasion, who, no doubt, has studied unions of the Gentiles. One is a horse doctor; another is a land-surveyor and auctioneer. I have been told there is one or two of them blind, and that one mostly looked at the drawings wrong side upwards.

I shall see by your next if you wish any further information. If you do, I am in a situation to send it you. The London architects ought to stir, they have been used very ill.

A FAIR TRADESMAN.